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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses problems facing endangered languages and strategies for maintaining Native languages. The most serious case involves languages whose last fluent speakers are elderly or already gone. Speakers of severely endangered languages no longer constitute speech communities. They cannot interact with other speakers because other speakers are exceedingly few or far between. A strategy for maintaining these languages is to develop an archival collection through recording the spoken language before it is lost entirely. Although some might view an archive as a mausoleum rather than "really living," it is a better alternative than complete extinction. However, perhaps the language can aspire to societal reattachment or even more--to intergenerational transmission as the mother tongue of a vibrant speech community. Revernacularization or native language acquisition is so difficult because it requires informal spontaneous bases, outside any formal institution. Schools are normally programmed and not intergenerational, while mother tongues are intergenerational and not programmed. Revernacularization requires not only intergenerational language transmission, but societal change as well. In order for the old language to be transmitted from parent to child, informal role relationships that have already been established in a new language must come to be implemented in the old language. Every infant acquiring their native language at home must have ample out-of-home experiences for informal use of the language. As well, every student who acquires their native language at school must have ample out-of-school experiences to use that language. To be successful, reversing language shift through intergenerational mother-tongue transmission requires both community and family building. (LP)

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CONCLUSION

Maintaining Languages
What Works? What Doesn't?[1]

Joshua Fishman

The last time many of us were assembled at this university Dang Pham, Deputy Director of the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs, indicated that the United States Government recognizes a special debt of responsibility to assist Native American peoples to foster and strengthen their languages. This second conference at Northern Arizona University was to be a more concrete step in that direction, listening to ideas, perhaps formulating plans that could benefit from such support, and I am sure that all of you are going to be very alert, just as I am, are going to be very alert, to see if any of the promises that were made at the first meeting will materialize. It is an understatement to say that I am pleased and honored to be here. The opportunity to interact with American Indian languages and their activists is an experience that very few sociolinguists in the United States have been able to have. The reason old-timers like myself still come to these meetings is because sometimes we hear a younger colleague saying things that make us understand language maintenance even better than before, let alone finding out what they are doing, which is what we really have to keep up with.

But it will take more than conferences to keep most American Indian languages from becoming extinct. If all it took was conferences, then the languages would not be in the sad condition that most of them are in now because many of them have been exposed to anthropologists and conferences before. If not conferences, what then? Lots of different approaches have been tried. Is there anything that can be learned from these past efforts, not just among American Indians, but all over the world? A huge proportion, perhaps even the majority, of the world's languages are faced by the very same problems, and people all over the world have tried the best they could. So what can be learned from all that experience?

I spend my summer and winter months at Stanford in the Linguistics Department and my fall and spring days in New York on the campus of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine at Yeshiva University. I told one of my medical colleagues there that I would be talking today on the topic "What works? What doesn't?" So my medical

[1]This paper is adapted from the speech given by Dr. Fishman at the second stabilizing indigenous languages symposium on May 4, 1995.

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colleague, hearing that, said, "Oh, what works? What doesn't? What disease are you into?" So I looked him straight in the eye and I said, "Lack of sufficient inter-generational mother-tongue transmission." And he said, "Oh, you must be in speech pathology." He was not too far wrong, except that most of the pathology that I am into is sociolinguistic in nature.

But his general point was very well taken. Before one can answer the question "What works? What doesn't?" one must specify the disease as precisely as possible. Language endangerment or language destabilization is not a specific disease entity, is not a specific diagnosis, but rather the name of an entire cluster of diseases. If you like, it is an entire department in the medical school. It is what pulmonary medicine is to pneumonia, or cardio-vascular medicine is to a heart murmur, or rehabilitation medicine is to a fractured pelvis. That is, we have to get down to the specific diagnoses, rather than to talk about the departments as such. Lack of sufficient inter-generational mother-tongue transmission is not the only and not even the most serious of the diseases of endangered languages. You have already heard about them, so I am assuming that in the stance of the good teacher, you can stand to hear it again. Sometimes, if you hear it again in other words, it becomes clearer in a different way.

There are at least two other more serious problems for endangered languages, more acute than just lack of mother-tongue transmission. There are languages whose last fluent speakers are already gone or are about to go. At a meeting at Glorieta near Santa Fe, New Mexico, a few months ago, we had actually the last living speaker of one of the languages come. It was a very sad experience for everyone, not just for that woman. And perhaps the saddest thing is that she cannot even talk to her sister anymore, who was the next-to-last speaker before she recently died. She can not call up anybody. The only person for her to talk to is a linguist and that is no fun.

Those who speak still living but severely endangered languages no longer constitute speech communities. They are scattered in old age homes, in convalescent centers, in the geographically dispersed homes of kin or even of non-kin. They cannot interact with other speakers because other speakers are exceedingly few or exceedingly far between. So the question that could be put is: How can they be saved from oblivion? Now I think it is an important thing to ask because those of you coming from strong languages, particularly Navajo, may not think I am talking about you. But there are already communities in your language that are like that. In fact, in many areas, such as Hualapai, those communities speak distinctive dialects that are going to be gone. And the loss of a dialect is as much a loss of authenticity as the loss of a language. Having the language shrink down to one dialect is itself a great loss because those dialects were different because there were also

other differences. There are never just dialect differences. They go along with differences in customs, and those differences also get lost.

Well, an obvious answer might be that if we could at least adequately record the spoken language before it was lost entirely (adequately record might mean audio and video and also producing a printed record), we could approximate a good bit of the grammar. We could approximate the phonology; we could approximate a good bit of the lexicon or at least the word forming features of the lexicon. I say approximate because by the time that you are down to the last few speakers of the language, you are often not getting the genuine article anymore. It has already changed in the process of attrition. It has changed and is not what it was, even in strictly linguistic terms. Yet you are getting an approximation, approximation of the prosody, of the rhythm of the language, which is actually one of those elusive areas of the beauty of languages that are very quickly lost and very hard to note down and very hard to learn. And we would also get some of the world view, some of the wisdom, some of the folklore, some of the belief system as well.

For languages hovering on the verge of extinction, the answer to "What works?" is perhaps an archival collection. I remember going to the archival collection for Welsh dialects. Welsh is not about to die, but it has terrible problems. But most of its dialects have gone and fortunately they recognized this as long ago as there were automatic recording devices, and they have recordings of now-vanished dialects for the whole century. In fact, their problem now is how to transfer these recordings to new equipment because the equipment in which they recorded originally is no longer available. Not only is the dialect gone, but the recording equipment is also gone. There is no machinery to listen to some of those early tapes. They are now beginning to digitalize these tapes. That will now take many years. But a serious archival collection is an answer to what works for languages about to disappear, and it would not hurt for many of us to realize that maybe we should give some attention to that.

We do not think we are there. We certainly hope we are not there, but the better part of caution is to start working on that because part of it is going, even if part of it is staying. So the sooner and more completely this is done, the better. Then such archival material can be used to learn the language as a second language, so that even such terribly weakened languages do not have to die entirely. They live in the way museum specimens live. Languages live under glass, too. Now you know that is not really living, but that is the most we can do for some of them. It is an honor that we owe them, to at least do that for them, having abused and neglected them as much as we have.

I am aware of only one language to have been fully re-vernacularized, to have become fully societally revived from the written

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record, namely Hebrew. And only a few more have been re-vernacularized in some small and atypical clusters of speakers, based upon the record. There are such small clusters of speakers of Sanskrit who raise their children speaking Sanskrit. There are small clusters of speakers of Gee. When I was in Egypt, soon after the Israeli-Egyptian accords were signed, I had the pleasure of being taken around by a Coptic gentleman who was one of a small group that was speaking Coptic to their children. There are also such small revivals from the record for Manx, Cornish, and even Latin. In the Vatican, there are little groups of clergy that have lunch together. "Let's have lunch next Thursday," they say, the Thursday Latin lunch. They have a Latin table at which they sit and have lunch in Latin. However, such very small revivals are not really speech communities. They are what I might call gatherings of hobbyists. Their language is their hobby, and they come together on rare occasions to indulge themselves in it.

Since there are literally thousands of languages in the world that are detached societally, vestigial societally, it is important to realize that this solution, archivization, works in the sense that if started early enough, socially vestigial languages can be saved from total extinction. But the question is whether "that is really living."

Many languages are dead as far as certain beholders are concerned, i.e. some languages are "wished to be dead." This is because they represent cultures that are problematic for their opponents. I could finance this conference if I had a dollar for every time since the beginning of the nineteenth century opponents said that Welsh was dead, Irish was dead, Scots Gaelic was dead, Frisian was dead, Alsatian was dead, Breton was dead, Basque was dead, and Occitan was dead, just to stay in western Europe, not to go into Soerbian, Yiddish, Belorussian, and Ainu and so on and so forth in other parts of the world. It is a diagnosis often pronounced prematurely. Even by people who should know better, because they are from that speech area. One of the problems of disintegrating languages is that their speech communities and networks are no longer in touch with each other. The fact that it is dead in one place is maybe unfortunately true, whereas at the same time, in speech networks miles away it can still be functioning, even functioning intergenerationally. You should guard against the subjectivity that is involved in proclaiming a language dead; even with respect to medical school problems. The actual definition of when someone is dead is not an open and shut case. And with respect to societal phenomena, it is even less open and shut. Nevertheless, many languages have really died. We may have no record of them, and the best that can be done for others is to archive them before it is irreparably too late.

So, for some languages the question is, Is an archives a mausoleum or is it really living? Is it "let's pretend living" or is it

"really living"? Well, if the alternative is complete extinction or obliteration, then an archive might be viewed as "really living." That is as close to really living that some languages are going to be. There will be scholars and graduate students, some of them coming from the same background that mausoleum language represents, and they will examine it again. Now that we have audio-recording, they can examine it even better than they could before, if you are wise enough to do the archive as the Welsh did, not just in transcription, but in audio. So, if it is not really living, if you quarrel with that, it might still be heard in the walls of the classroom where it could be taught again or it could be that someone will organize a society for the lovers of Manx. They will get together on alternate Thursdays and they will say some of those words again. That will be as close to living as some languages will get, perhaps.

However, if the alternative for a particular language is not just the mausoleum, perhaps it can aspire to societal re-attachment or even more to inter-generational mother-tongue transmission, not just to societal re-attachment. It may realistically aspire to the inter-generational transmission of that re-attachment, so that it becomes the mother tongue of a vibrant speech community.

I have been collecting what people say about their languages. I have now thousands of statements, for hundreds of languages. I remember this one off-hand from Ainu in Japan, the statement is, "We will not go into the museum. We will not be archivized. We can still become pregnant. We can still bear children. And they can still laugh with Ainu on their lips." So, for some languages, a mausoleum would be really premature death, that is killing the patient in front of you. The issue is: Is there really an alternative to the mausoleum?

There are some societies represented in this room where elderly folk still enjoy life and they do so largely in their beloved language. They converse in it; they argue; they sing; and they pray, if prayer is permissible in that language. They entertain; they reminiscence; they counsel; and they feel fully alive in doing so and if you visit them, you can see the pleasure that they have. But their children and grandchildren do not do that. These old folks might not even realize just how endangered their languages are because they speak so freely, because they enjoy so fully. They enjoy their reminiscences and the stories and the anecdotes and the proverbs, and, at times, some of them have newsletters and records and performances that they go to. But they have no younger heirs. In another decade or two or three, their ranks will be so thinned that anyone wondering how it sounded to banter in the language would have difficulty finding an answer. I got an e-mail request from a young scholar in California this week asking 'are their any recordings of just animated natural conversation' in a language that he is trying to learn, because all he has is language records where the

teacher says the words very slowly and carefully and the other person in the conversation responds in the same fashion. So if you really want to know how it really sounded, you better get it while it is really being spoken, if only as an insurance policy, and do it when informants are plentiful, rather than you only have one left and you have to take whatever that one has.

Now it has been said by scoffers that languages do not die, they commit suicide. And sometimes this is literally true. Some of them begin to do it far before they have any need to. Some of them do it toward the end. Sometimes they may say they wish there was a younger generation that knew the language, but they do not really do anything about it. At an unconscious level, some of them may even enjoy being the last real native speakers. I have had people in old age homes come up to me and saying with pride, "Don't listen to him; listen to me. I am the real last native speaker." Such people might be quite upset to find out that there is a young speaker or there is still a club of young speakers. So, worry about denial, that is important, and worry about death wish, not only death wishes toward someone else's language, but toward your own, at the end. Reinterpret the fact that older speakers sometimes do not even seek new ways of re-establishing the inter-generational connection in light of the fact that they can only do the things they have been doing. They can only do the things that they have been doing all along. That is the only thing they know how to do. They have their cohorts; they have their hobby group or their club; and those things are age-graded. The things they talk about, the things they sing about, are old-age-graded and no young person is going to get any pleasure out of these kinds of conversation. ("What did the doctor tell you last time you went there?") Those are not young topics.

New ways are needed because, obviously, the old ones have not succeeded. And these communities of old timers, enjoying the language, they will soon have to fish or cut bait. Fish — that means to galvanize themselves to work out a joint effort with the generations of their children and grandchildren. Sometimes it is easier with the grandchildren than with the children. The grandchildren, at least, do not have the guilt experience of having chucked the language themselves. So, I want to say to our Hualapai speaker who dreads becoming a grandfather, that it could be great fun. I must say, having five grandchildren who speak my threatened language, that, if I had known grandchildren were so much fun, I would have started with them. It is the biggest lift. They make me think that maybe I will triumph over death when I hear them speaking to me. So, that is the fish. They have to find young people or young people have to find them. Both of those things are important and there are California programs of sharing young people with old people They find grandparents, who are still speaking endangered languages, for young people who want to learn them, providing two way satisfaction

and another chance for vernacularizing. Cut bait —begin building oral history and oral cultural archives that will outlive these old timers that are enjoying themselves and will be available for their great-grandchildren.

So, as far as what works and what does not, there are two possibly gratifying and successful inter-generational options when societally intact seniors are still plentiful and available. They can go in one direction, the progressive de-vernacularization of the archival variety or they can go in the inter-generationally re-vernacularizing direction. Most of the languages that I have studied intensively are not Amerindian ones. The only Amerindian one that I have had repeated contact with, as you have heard, is Navajo over very many years, and not enough contact even there. But the inter-generational re-vernacularization route has turned out to be unexpectedly difficult, particularly when the two generational hiatus already exists. The grandchildren may be more positive. They have less guilt, but they only know about the rumor of where the fire burned, where the holy fire was. They only see that as a story. The life is no longer there and the language is a lot easier to teach than to build a culture that surrounds and needs and uses that language.

The question is why is re-vernacularization so hard? Much harder than either language teaching or language learning, that are hard enough. We are not very good at language teaching because vernaculars are inter-generational on informal, spontaneous bases, outside any formal institutionalized bases. That is what they <u>are</u>. I listened to what Damon Clarke, the Hualapai, was saying, and he was talking about informal life. All of his examples about girls and about grandparents were informal, daily life. Vernaculars are acquired in infancy, in the family, which means in intimacy. They are handed on that way, in intimacy and in infancy. Schools teach and students learn, even languages sometimes, but schools are programmed and not generally inter-generational institutions. I do know of a few schools where it is required that the parents attend the school if the child is to be admitted to the school. But there are very few schools of that kind. Fortunately, my wife once attended such a school when our child was admitted. My wife did know the language, but most of the parents did not. Therefore, they were learning everything the child was learning and they could go home and talk about those same things that the teacher was talking about in the school and do so in the language of the teacher. But schools are normally programmed and not inter-generational, and mother-tongues are inter-generational and not programmed. You see, they have almost completely opposite constellations of forces.

Why is breaking through to this crucial stage of inter-generational intimacy and informality so hard for any large number of people? I know thousands of people who have decided to do it. So, "will" is very

important. But it often is just not enough. Why can not we organize for institutionalized languages, languages of formal institutions? We can organize for languages of school; we can organize for languages of church; we can organize for languages of government; we can organize for languages of the upper-work sphere. Yet none of the foregoing result in informal, inter-generational mother-tongue transmission. All those thousands of years that Hebrew was transmitted through formal institutions did not help it to become a mother-tongue. It took a group who said, "We don't want that formal institution. We don't want it at all." They, therefore, broke away. It was a break-away group. Right, they were secessionists. They broke away from society and created a society of their own. It is very hard to do that.

Vernacularization is the opposite of institutionalization. Re-vernacularization requires not only inter-generational language transmission, but societal change. More than a language involved. If you are going to change the language, you have to change the society. That is, informal society must change its way of living during the long stretch from one generation to the next. Schools do not stretch that long, from one generation to the next. Informal role relationships already established in a new language must come to be implemented in the old language, in order for the old language to be transmitted from parents to children. Parents are already talking the new language; they have to change themselves , and they need a society that is changing, too, for them to transmit it to a newborn as a mother tongue. Informal topics and places already associated with the new language must come to be associated with the old language, if it is to be transmitted via intimacy and in infancy.

There must be consensual advantages for changing from the new ways to the old ways. No one changes to cut off their nose to spite their face. No one does it because they are masochists and they are just looking for something that is going to hurt. That is not why people change their way of living. There has to be something that they are gaining, that they believe they are gaining, something that means so much to them that it is a worthwhile gain to them. Every infant acquiring the beloved old language at home must have ample out-of-home interlocutors, topics, and places for informal use of the language all the way through to the time when he or she becomes a parent. Every student, and I think this may shake many of you in this room, acquiring the beloved language in school must have ample out-of-school and after-school informal interlocutors, places, and topics to see him or her through to his or her own child-bearing stage. Re-vernacularization requires changes in established informal conventions and their reinforcement from various directions, from status-gain, from friendship-gain, from affection-gain. All of these are sources of support

that endangered languages (and institutionalized languages) typically lack.

Now I want to make it clear: I do not say that we can do without institutions such as schools, churches, or other agencies. But languages can become institutionalized and remain only within the institutions that teach them and espouse them and use them. Institutions, although important, should be on tap and not on top of a language. The language does not belong to them. The language makes use of them. Those who are building the language make use of them. Above all, these institutions should foster the language as links with the outside world, with the informal interactions that constitute the bulk of life, the crux of inter-generational mother-tongue transmission. And that is why it is hard to break through. That is why a revolution is required. That is why those very folks who broke away from the book of the church, the Jewish book of the Jewish "church," led the way to re-vernacularize Hebrew. They were social revolutionaries.

This is something the Irish revivalists learned late and to their chagrin in having banked on the school and on the Minister of Finance to do the job. Neither of them together, and they were not always pulling together, could do it for most of the children growing up. There is a catch 22 here that I am sure you have noticed. Endangered languages become such because they lack informal inter-generational transmission and informal daily life support, but, in order to cease being endangered, they need exactly what they do not have and cannot easily get. To move from being have-nots to being haves, a societal revolution is required so that not one or two institutions support the beloved language. It is crucial informal relationships that constitute the lion's share of normal daily life (listen again to the Hualapai speaker), crucial informal relationships that constitute the lion's share of normal daily life. These relations are the ones that bring you back into inter-generational mother-tongue transmission and give the beloved language the support it needs. Can this be done? Is such a revolution possible? Can people change their daily life by planning together to do so? Well, I have both good news and bad news for you. The good news is that my experience with thirteen in-depth cases, that I have devoted about a quarter of a century to, tells me that it is possible for small groups of quite atypical individuals to re-arrange their lives individually and collectively exactly in this revolutionary way. The more dislocated the language is, the smaller those groups will be. A language that is far gone requires a great deal of idiosyncratic support. It is hard to predict who is going to devote their lives to them any more. It will be an exceedingly small group. This is one of those cases that "To them that have shall be given, and to them that have not, shall be taken away." The smaller the group, the harder it is for them to find even a small

handful of people that will really rearrange their lives on their behalf. In language as in business, nothing succeeds like success.

What do they do, these small groups of totally dedicated individuals who rearrange their lives, not for the language, but for the lifestyle, the lifestyle that the language is related to? First of all, they depend primarily on themselves and on each other, rather than on outside support. Outside support comes from people that are not using the language. They have nothing to gain from helping you use the language and, therefore, if they do support you at sometime, they are not going to be there when you need them, down the road. So these folks depend primarily on themselves and on each other. They start with feasible goals and their immediate informal or local lower-level formal environment, with the kind of school they can support, the kind of school they can run, the kind of school they can control, and also other environments that they can control. They will win friends and influence people by offering them valuable rewards, services, and co-opting them informally as well.

I have here this little book titled *Social Work and the Welsh Language*. Every page is in both languages, not every other page, but every page is in both languages, so all you have to do for any word you do not know is to go across the line to find it in English. And what is the book *Social Work and the Welsh Language* about? It is about using Welsh in job training, job retraining, health counseling, literacy efforts, school transitioning, helping kids go from elementary to high school, bereavement counseling, building happy peer group ties, and vocational planning. In other words, Welsh language activists offer these services to the community.

They will help you with your problem, but you may have to join a little peer group that is meeting afternoons to have lunch in Welsh. It may be worth it to you, to get help with job or with school transitioning, or with physical recovery after an illness. So they win friends and influence people by offering them valuable rewards and services, mostly at the inter-personal level and co-opting these people informally as they go along. They concentrate on inter-generational experiences that include the young and the very young, together with the older. They focus on those functions that they can fully control — family, friendship, lower level formal institutions, and, above all, they do not wait too long to get started on all of the above. An early start before inter-generational mother-tongue transmission has ceased to occur is worth more than tons of sage advice. It is better and easier to foster informal life when it still exists. It is the hardest thing to create afterwards. It is very hard to create, to program that which is essentially not programmed or programmable. At best, you can program situations that might facilitate it.

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One thing we can be sure of, those who do not give up, but try again and again, become a community of hope, a community of dedication. They become a *gemeinschaft* rather than a *gesellschaft*, if you know those German sociological terms. So "what works, what does not" sounds like a simple question. But it is really a most difficult question. As in most complex societal areas, the answer is, "It all depends." You know that. It all depends on what the degree of endangerment is because the solution of what works varies with the problem. It depends on the resources available, particularly man-power resources to make things work. It depends on imponderable, historical, contextual circumstances, like "Are you fighting English or are you fighting Frisian?" I once went and visited a Frisian area and they brought in a small group that are surrounded by Frisians. They thought Frisians were the enemy. It makes a difference whether you are fighting English, Dutch, or Frisian because all those languages differ greatly in what they have to offer to those who will totally join their ranks. So there are imponderables and you have to just hope on the flip of a coin you come out the right way. There is nothing you can do about some of those things, but, as you know, imponderable advantages have a way of going in favor of those people who are on top anyway. That means you do not have much latitude for mistakes. If you bark up the wrong tree, you will not live to bark many other years. If you bet on things that do not lead to inter-generational mother-tongue transmission, but rather lead to nice graduation parties from school, then you have lost another go at it.

Many of you know about the famous Dr. Samuel Johnson, an English lexicographer and conversationalist of the eighteenth century. He had a habit in his dictionary of giving highly personal word definitions. To illustrate the word "focus", which was a new word in English at the time, borrowed from French, he gave the following sentence: "Nothing focuses the mind like an imminent hanging. One's [own] even more so than another's." All right, I am going to give you a quotation from Dr. Samuel Johnson who defined "lost cause." He said, "A lost cause is a cause whose adherents permit hope to take precedence over experience."

And what we have to ask ourselves, "Is reversing language shift a lost cause?" Well, perhaps it is. But all of life is a lost cause. We are all sitting and dying right in this room, except you feel it more than I do because I am talking and you are listening. All of life is a lost cause. We all know the road leads only downward into the grave. There is no other way it will go. Those that have hope at least share the benefits of hope, and one of those benefits is community. Reversing language shift efforts on behalf of the inter-generational mother-tongue transmission is community building, that is what is essentially required, in and through the beloved language. So, what have they accomplished, those Irish

revivalists whom I have studied for such a long time? Can you imagine, in seventy-five years of work, which is longer than most of you have worked on this problem by a long shot, they have gone from a time when five percent of the Irish population was Irish mother-tongue to a time when three percent is Irish mother-tongue. After having tried everything that you are ever likely to think of. But, by this time, two-thirds of the population understands Irish, which was not the case at that earlier time. Two-thirds of it have been strongly influenced by all these things that the revivalists did, even though few of them ever actually speak the language. Irish would be in even worse condition had the revivalists not done all they did.

The Irish revivalists have voluntary neighborhoods in which all community services and all community informal life is in Irish. They are involved in a constant outreach effort (through clubs, camps, vacation spots, and teams) toward the appreciation and understanding of the Irish language. And that is why there are two-thirds of them now in the country who when they go to France and do not want to be mistaken for an Englishman, talk Irish to each other in a Paris cafe , even though they do not do it when they get back to Dublin. They could, but they do not. Their life has not changed that way. So, can anyone doubt that Irish today would be dead as a vernacular had it not been for the insistence of the stubborn revivalists that they wanted it for themselves and their children, regardless of what other Irish folk say, regardless of what other Irish folks do.

I want to say in closing that a huge proportion of my quotations in my new book deal with sanctity, that is with the sense that there is something holy about the language. It may be sanctity itself or sanctity once removed, sanctity by translation. The holy script was translated into this language of mine. Or I just feel God through that language because it brings me closer to the spirit and the soul and life as well as life after death. So, underlying all of this there must be a life-style in which there is a sense of the sanctity of custom and tradition. The ultimate source of all societal dedication is a feeling that one is dealing with something that is out of the ordinary, hum-drum experience.

As one who is the child of two language activists and the father and grandfather of language activists, I am sure that the lives of four generations have been enriched and even ennobled by the struggle. Our language is still endangered, but it would be infinitely more so without our struggle. Archives have been built for this language, nice mausoleums, but we activists decided that we were going to live in it. The prophetic reading for this week, for the lection of this week in Jewish Orthodox houses of worship, includes the following: "The days are coming when the plowman will be overtaken by the reaper." The imagery here is that the wheat will grow so fast that the reaper who is cutting the wheat will catch up with the plowman who is putting in the

new seeds. "And the planters [will be overtaken] by the ones treading the grapes, new wine will drip from the mountains and from all the hills, they will plant new vineyards and drink their wine. They will make gardens and eat their fruits." So, here is my parting sentences: Do not give up; but do not get your priorities wrong, because you do not get many chances in this game. And above all remember that living languages are not primarily in institutions, but above them, beyond them, all around them.